CXIV. *A further Account of the poiſonous Effects of the* Oenanthe Aquatica Succo viroſo crocante *of* Lobel, *or* Hemlock Dropwort, *by* W. Watſon, *M.D. F.R.S.*

To the ROYAL SOCIETY.

Gentlemen,

Read Dec. 21, 1758. IN the month of June 1746. I communicated to you ſome obſervations concerning the *Oenanthe aquatica Succo viroſo crocante* of Lobel, in relation to its poiſonous effects upon ſome French priſoners at Pembroke. Theſe obſervations were afterwards publiſhed in the *Philoſophical Tranſactions* *, with an accurate repreſentation of the plant itſelf, from an original drawing by that compleat artiſt Mr. Ehret. This at that time I thought the more neceſſary, as it was of no ſmall importance to the public, to be well acquainted with a plant, the effects of which, when taken into our bodies, were ſo much to be dreaded. This account of mine, as well as the repreſentation of the plant, were republiſhed from the Tranſactions into the periodical works of that time; from whence a more extenſive knowlege of and acquaintance with this plant might have been hoped for. A late inſtance however has evinced, that theſe endeavours have not had their full effect, as the plant in queſtion is not yet ſufficiently known, and attended to.

* See Phil. Tranſ. N°. 480. p. 227.

John

The Royal Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve, and extend access to *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)*. www.jstor.org

John Midlane, a cabinet-maker of Havant in Hampſhire, aged about 58, and of a groſs habit of body, was adviſed to make uſe of the water parſnep, as a remedy for a ſevere ſcorbutic diſorder, which he had long been troubled with; and for which he had taken a variety of medicines. Inſtead of the water parſnep, which he purpoſed to take, there were gathered for him ſome roots of the *oenanthe* above mentioned; a large one of which was pounded in a mortar, and the juice thereof ſqueezed through a linen cloth, and amounted to about five ſpoonfuls. This was ſuffered to ſtand all night, and the next morning (Mar. 31. 1758.), at about half an hour paſt five, he drank the whole quantity, except the ſediment.

In about an hour and half after he had taken this juice, he walked about the town upon ſome buſineſs; and a little before ſeven, upon his return home, about an hundred yards from his own houſe, he firſt complained that he was ill; and having walked about thirty yards further, was ſo bad as to go into a neighbour's houſe to reſt himſelf. He was ſoon led from thence to his own houſe by two men, and told them, that he was affected as though he had loſt the uſe of his limbs. When he was placed in his chair, he complained greatly of pain all over him; but particularly in his head. His ſtomach was immediately after affected, and he had great reachings to vomit. At the ſecond attempt he threw up about half a pint of a clear watry liquor; at the firſt and third attempt he diſcharged ſcarce any thing. He was then ſeized with a great propenſity to go to ſtool, which went off in about three minutes. After this,

he with the greateſt difficulty was conducted up ſtairs to bed, where he pulled off part of his cloaths himſelf. When he was put to bed, he was attacked with very ſevere convulſions, which in about a quarter of an hour deprived him of his ſenſes; and continued, with a few intermiſſions, till he died, a little before nine o'clock; which was about three hours and half after the juice had been taken. A profuſe ſweat accompanied the whole of theſe ſymptoms: he foamed conſiderably at the mouth, and his belly ſwelled greatly. He purged very much ſoon after he was dead, but not before.

As this poor man had taken this doſe before his family were up, no one could imagine from whence his diſorder aroſe; and conſequently the apothecary, who was called to him, was able to form a judgment of his caſe only from the ſymptoms; as on his coming he found his patient ſenſeleſs, and who had not, while his mind was undiſturbed, told any one the probable cauſe of his complaints. He took from him however about ten ounces of blood, and endeavoured to get ſome *vinum ipecacuanhæ* into his mouth: but his jaws were cloſed ſo faſt, not above a ſpoonful paſſed, and that by the accident of his mouth opening of itſelf.

The ſymptoms, with which the perſon abovementioned was attacked, were much the ſame as thoſe which were obſerved in the French priſoners, who were poiſoned by the ſame root at Pembroke. In both inſtances occurred thoſe ſevere muſcular ſpaſms, which kept the under jaw ſo cloſe to the upper, that, while the ſpaſm continued, ſcarce any force could ſeparate them. In both inſtances likewiſe

wiſe a conſiderable time paſſed before the perſons, who had eaten of this root, though they had taken enough of it to deſtroy them, perceived themſelves diſordered by it.

I am obliged for this communication to Richard Warner, Eſq; of Woodford, a gentleman of great merit, whoſe zeal for the promotion of uſeful knowlege I have many times experienced.

The expediency of laying before you obſervations of this ſort, which may tend, by making people careful of what they take, to the ſaving the lives of many, makes no apology neceſſary for ſo doing. I am, with all poſſible regard,

Gentlemen,

Your moſt obedient humble Servant,

Lincoln's-Inn-Fields,
20 Dec. 1758.

W. Watſon.

CXV. *Extract of a Letter to* John Eaton Dodſworth, *Eſq; from Dr.* George Forbes *of* Bermuda, *relating to the* Patella, *or* Limpet Fiſh, *found there.*

2 April, 1758.

Read Dec. 21, 1758.

AS a curioſity for your eſteemed friend Mr. Theobald, the Captain will deliver you two fiſhes, intirely ſingular here, and never before obſerved amongſt us. The one is of the ſhell kind, and changed its figure ſo often, that it was difficult to make a drawing. However